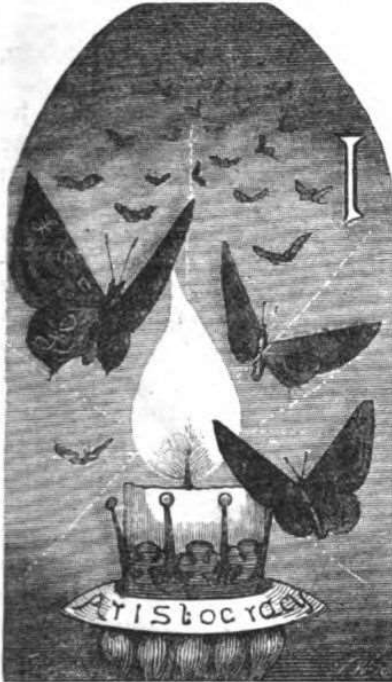


January 7, 1871.

SOCIAL GRIEVANCES.

SHAM SWELLS.



I WAS once travelling in the *banquette* of the diligence, which in those days ran between Dijon and Geneva, with the conductor and an Englishman; who, the moment the postillion had left off cursing his horses—calling one a “sacred burgess,” another a “determined pig,” and so on—entered at once into conversation. He was well dressed—too well dressed, in fact; talked with intelligence on the country and people; was modest and unassuming in his opinions; and yet he lacked that indefinable something which at once declares the gentleman.

After we had been travelling four or five hours, we fell to discussing a certain noble lord—as how, indeed, can happen otherwise when two or three Englishmen are gathered together?—and he displayed such a prodigious acquaintance with the peerage and its members, their habits, manners, alliances, and even their bankers’ accounts, without a suspicion of swagger, that I was fairly taken aback. Seeing my looks of

astonishment, and perhaps of incredulity, as he mentioned name after name of titled personages, he hastened to explain himself; and, drawing a card from his pocket-book, he handed it to me, saying, with a touch of humour in his voice—

“There, sir, you will see now that I am perfectly capable of taking their measure.”

The card bore the name and address of Mr. Sheares, the celebrated tailor of Acqueduct-street.

I could not help laughing, while I respected him. He announced his profession with as much easy affability as he had displayed in talking of his noble clients—I suppose no man is a hero to his tailor. He was evidently not ashamed of his trade; and, in short, was a very good fellow. We parted on excellent terms; and, on my return to town, I asked him to find a space for my name on his books, which he did. I have reason to believe he has never regretted it, for he has not yet invited me to dinner—which, I am given to understand, is a practice amongst his craft towards those scions of the aristocracy who don’t pay their bills.

If he had not informed, he would not have deceived me. I should have set him down as a snob, or a Sham Swell, who is to be held up to obloquy in this paper as a heavy social grievance.

Sir Walter Scott says, in his introduction to the “Monastery”—

“In every period, the attempt to gain and maintain the higher rank of society has depended on the power of assuming and supporting a certain fashionable kind of affectation, usually connected with some vivacity of talent and energy of character, but distinguished at the same time by a transcendent flight beyond sound reason and common sense: both faculties too vulgar to be admitted into the estimate of one who claims to be esteemed a choice spirit of the age!”



This is very nearly being a perfect definition of a Sham Swell. They are not, men or women, quite snobs; but it is difficult, at all times, where to draw the line which separates them.

Come, dear reader! Our acquaintance has been improving lately. Take thy walk abroad with me: we will seek them in their lairs. First, we'll have a chop at the club, and then withdraw to the smoking-room—the only real withdrawing-room—as a sure find.

So, the chop was succulent. It is Drawing-room day. The view in St. James's-street is charming. What ho, waiter!—draw two chairs to the window: we will view the duchesses and grocers' wives as they proceed to pay their respects to Royalty. The cigar box, two claret glasses filled with crushed ice, a slice of lemon, powdered sugar, and pour Scotch whisky in up to the brim. Wait, wait! O beloved and too thirsty one!—wait till the spirit hath melted the ice; or, by my halidome, thou wilt be borne hence on base shoulders to the nearest station. Now refill with ice, and drink, and be thankful.

I am fortunate in being able at once to draw your attention to a very favourable specimen. Do you see that Jewish-looking individual who has taken up his position at the farther window, where he will remain all the afternoon, to the great delight of the other members, who do not consider him a creditable ornament to the club? When he appeared in the candidates' book as "Count Walter de Crécy," everybody thought he was a distinguished foreigner, especially as he was proposed by a Duke, and seconded by a Viscount. It turned out afterwards that he was the son of old Watercresches, a German-Jew fence, who "melted" for many years, with great success, at the back of a black doll shop in Houndsditch, and subsequently obtained high civic honours. His son, after he left Harrow, was sent abroad for five years with a suitable bear leader, and he returned from Rome with the title you know. Five hundred pounds to Prince Tortoni, and a small gratification to a distinguished personage living not a hundred miles from the Vatican, and his Countship was an accomplished fact. That is his happiness, to be seen sitting in the window of our club for two hours every afternoon during the season. You hardly ever see him speak to anybody except his proposer and

second—who, they say, from being in pretty *stiff* with him, didn't dare refuse putting him up, or to give a gentle hint to a couple of trusty retainers to pill him. He has to put up with brutal remarks and open insults; but we can't drive him out—he is perfectly pachydermatous. He came up to Puthamdown the other day—he still retains a good deal of his native lisp—

"Thought to have theen your lorthip at Forbannock the other day."

"No, Count, not likely to see me when you're there."

"Moth ecthtrdinary thing—the whole time I woth there, hith Grathe never had a bit of fith put on the table."

"I suppose you ate it all in the kitchen, Ikey," said Charley Chaffers.

And all this he will submit to, that he may go and swagger it, at some pothouse to which he belongs, about "my Club, our Duke," and so on.

Do you see that good-looking man, about forty, incomparably dressed, who is talking with great deference to Claymore, the rich Midland squire? That is Owen Glendower—oh, of course descended in a direct line—the Lombard-street banker, who is perfectly ashamed of the shop, and who would barter his till against a peerage. His early struggles were devoted to reach the inner circle of the Upper Ten, and he has succeeded—how, I don't know, for he is a consummate ass; and, beyond his good looks and big saucer eyes, doesn't possess a single merit. I was once staying at his house in Wales—a gimcrack, sham-Gothic affair, all weathercocks and pinnacles—and on one rainy morning, after breakfast, he asked me what I should like to do. It is I who ought to ask to be provided with the amusements I affect for that particular day. I hate its being arranged for me that I am to go hunting when I want to shoot, or go shooting when I want to fish. And therefore I answered, with decision—

"I am going to the smoking-room with a book, where I shall remain till lunch. If it rains, I shall go there after lunch till dinner time."

"Oh, but just come upstairs for a moment, and let me show you—"

What, do you think? Why, his jewel case, and studs, and fal-lals. Of course, he is very civil to me, because I keep a large account at his bank, chiefly for the sake of

having the right to walk into the parlour and discuss commercial affairs, which makes him furious. Here he is.

"How do, Glen? How are Consols to-day?"

"Now pray, Gaddy, don't. I must insist on leaving the shop east of Temple Bar."

"Oh, very well; only, as I had heard they had fallen three-eighths, and I have forty thousand to buy in, I thought I might tell you, and save myself a journey into the city. However, I'll telegraph to my brokers instead."

"Now, Gaddy, don't be cross. Business is business everywhere. I'll see to it. It shall be all right. Don't be vicious for such a trifle. Oh, Duke, may I have a word?"

There. You see in those few words he has shown his whole character. Avaricious, vain, and a cringing tuft-hunter.

"What is it," said an eminent pauper to me the other day, whom Glendower had been snubbing, "that makes all bankers' sons, from Barnes Newcome to Glendower, so confoundedly offensive to me?"

"Probably their money and the state of your balance, old fellow. When Glendower is raised to the peerage, which it is said he is about to be, with the title of Baron Pursey, he will become simply intolerable. Insolent to his inferiors, and, as a *novus homo*, obsequious to his peers, feigning a humility insufferable in its arrogance, we may well hope that, when White's has opened its portals to him, he will not honour us here any longer."

Observe that little, supercilious, dirty-looking snob, who is twirling the feeble ends of a mangy, straw-coloured moustache. That is young Penn—Inky Penn, they call him. He is the son of a country attorney, who is agent to the Earl of Propergait. They do say that Mrs. Penn was more intimate with his lordship than nice honour warranted, or than ladies ought to be who love their lords; but people spread such scandalous reports nowadays, which are always more or less eagerly listened to, that to be the author of a new and successful scandal is to be a greater man than the author of 'Tom Jones.' However, be that as it may, Inky shows no signs of aristocratic stock. When you dine on Guard at St. James's, you will have an opportunity of seeing how he is beloved by his brother-officers. I don't think these gentlemen

will retain him long amongst them; they object to cads, and have a way of making the regiment too hot for those they think best out of it. Hear him talk:—

"How do, Penn?"

"Oo! oo!" (Pennian for "How do you do?")

"Got a bad cold, I fear. That patrol duty these cold nights must be hard work."

"Oo! oo! oo!"

"Go over to Roach's, and get some lozenges."

Do you mark the ill-mannered and surly brute? Education? Never. If his father had sent him to Eton or Winchester, he would have been dead by this time, unless he had behaved himself very differently. He was sent to the grammar school of Duffington, his native town, where he received that useful commercial education for which it is celebrated. When the Earl announced his intention of getting him a commission in the Guards, he was removed to an expensive private tutor who prepared noblemen and gentlemen for the universities, public schools, army and navy, Royal Academy, Guy's Hospital, and everything else. Here, amongst the well-born, well-dressed, and moderately taught half-dozen, his fellow-pupils, he might have picked up some knowledge of manners and gentlemanly bearing, both of which he so signally lacks. But he preferred the society of Sally, the carrot-headed housemaid—who, it must be confessed, had the most honourable intentions towards him, and whose character was unimpeachable—and that of the young gentlemen's grooms, in whose company he was introduced to the pleasures of ratting, badger-drawing, cock-fighting, and bowl-of-punch drinking, in the sporting parlour of some Three Pigeons, where he was always faced by one of the right sort—as the slang phrase has it. The co-pups couldn't stand him, and the Rev. Rose Dillwater requested his papa to take him away. Then he got his commission, and soon succeeded in insinuating himself into the hatred of everybody. But he is very different at the paternal mansion in Duffington, where, with intolerable insolence and mendacity, he recounts his successes in the fashionable world. He is the favourite partner at whist of a distinguished personage, and a frequent and honoured guest at M—— H——. The attentions paid him by the female members of the aristocracy are the cause of innu-

merable embarrassments to him. Sensible people who hear him hold forth on his intimate relations with that august body, wonder why he is so fond of attending the bar of the Cock and Bottle, where he tipples and smokes with the jovial bagmen who use that famous hostelry. Still he goes down in Duffington "society." Mrs. de Junket—whose mamma was a *modiste*, and who would turn up her nose at you and me if we had a modest establishment in the town, and would no more think of calling upon us than of leaving out the *de* before her name, though she's no relation to the Devonshire Junkets—says that anybody can see that he is accustomed to the best society. She takes the *pas* of the doctors' and attorneys' wives—who love her accordingly—so I suppose she knows.

If you wish to see Sham Swelldom in all its glory, go into a small country town—especially if it has sporting or electioneering propensities. Duffington will, I dare say, do as well as another; and Penn will give you a letter of introduction to Mrs. de Junket. Before you present it, walk up and down the High-street for an hour or two during the fashionable period of the afternoon; and, if possible, throw yourself frequently in the way of Mrs. de Junket, who will favour you with a good many stares, and gather up her daughters under her wing, so to speak, when she meets you, as she considers you a suspicious person. Do you remember Mr. Spectator's visit to Sir Roger, and how the country people regarded him?

"Such is the variety of opinions which are here entertained of me; so that I pass amongst some for a wizard, and among others as a murderer; and all this for no other reason that I can imagine but because I do not hoot and halloa and make a noise."

You would probably be regarded in the same light till you had obtained Mrs. de Junket's protection and patronage.

The only good story I ever heard that little scoundrel Penn tell was about an incident which occurred at the Duffington hunt ball. He had gone down expressly for it, and put up at Mrs. de Junket's, that they might go—a large party—together. After Penn had done his duty by the ladies of the house, he cast about for something new. In a corner of the room sat a middle-aged lady, with two very pretty daughters. Penn

thought he would try his powers of fascination on one of them, and asked Mrs. de J. who they were?

"I am sure, I don't know; they have been living here, in a beggarly little cottage, for the last year. I didn't call upon them—several people have; but I know nothing about them. I believe their name is Harduppe."

"Harduppe—why, of course! Pray, Mrs. de Junket, get some of your friends to introduce me."

"Captain Penn! Whatever London manners may be, I expect my guests not to dance out of my own set; or, at least, not with people I know nothing of, and whom I have not called upon."

"Called upon! Good gracious, Mrs. de Junket, do you know who they are? They are the mother and sisters of Jack Harduppe, of my regiment, who is heir to his uncle, Lord Grindstone. The old lord is a confounded old screw, and won't allow him a sixpence. They are poorly off now; but when the old man drops, there will be cakes and ale."

I believe Mrs. de J.'s face was a caution. Her "set" consisted of two "heavies," on detachment in the town, the son of the County Court judge, Penn, a dancing curate, and two or three hangers-on—enough to make up the Lancers and quadrilles; for which purpose, with exquisite taste and good breeding, they monopolized the top of the room. Penn got his introduction easily enough. After his dance was finished, my lady wished to be introduced to the Harduppes, but Penn pleaded it was her duty to call first.

She did, two days afterwards, when Jack Harduppe happened to have been down to see his mother and sisters. Jack saw the cards, and enclosed them in a note to Mr. de Junket, saying there must have been some mistake, as he didn't require his services at present.

Mr. de Junket is the gentleman who so kindly assists young and noble spendthrifts through their racing and monetary difficulties. During the process, a good deal of the money sticks to him—as it did to the measure of Cassim—and he has frequently complained of the severe and unmerited remarks made upon him by the various judges, both at common law and equity. This is the only connection with the aristocracy Mrs. de Junket has, that I know of.

When I first went into that part of the country where my estate lies, I was asked to dinner at the house of a hospitable neighbour, where I met a lady *de par le grand monde*, whom I had known in her and my youth, and whom I had never met since. Our paths had lain different and separate, and perhaps twenty years had elapsed since last we met. There is always, somehow, a freemasonry between well-bred people—or, at all events, there used to be—which reunites them after many years' absence, and takes up a link again, however long it may have been broken. We talked of old times, and of the difference in society nowadays to what it was. She was saying how difficult it was to get young men to go to balls, and how matters were changed. They wouldn't go for the mere pleasure of dancing, and she feared they went for purposes less innocent. There was no getting them away from their clubs.

I said that, when I was a young fellow, having just left Oxford and entering on London life, I belonged to one or two good clubs, and lived in the Temple on four hundred a-year, allowed me by my father, and never was so rich in my life. I dined out, went to balls, spent my autumn in country houses, and hardly ever had to pay for anything but my cab hire, clothes, and cigars. In short, I said, an agreeable, gentlemanlike young fellow, with talents of society, and a moderate income, may live like a prince.

To my astonishment, a good-looking snob, sitting next to this lady, with great, big brown eyes, from which occasionally shot flashes of sapient imbecility, a silly mouth with prominent teeth, and receding chin, proclaiming the half-educated idiot, cut into the conversation, and said—

"I can't contheve any man living all the year round on his friends."

"I dare say you can't, sir," I replied, with the quiet insolence I can assume at discretion; "but I was speaking of an agreeable gentleman."

The silly mouth looked sillier, till some one else, a minute afterwards, changed the conversation. He was the son of a purveyor of guano, who had amassed a large fortune. The wretched creature—on the strength of his good looks, which are undeniable, and an estate of a few hundred acres, on which he shoots the foxes, to the great delight of the surrounding squires, who are

great foxhunters—ventured to pit himself against the immortal Gadabout!

However, we are very good friends now. He has not, I fear, profited much by the rude lesson I taught him. He came up to me in our county club the other day—where, of course, there are some rough ones—and said—

"I do wish we could keep this club more exclusive. I would gladly pay ten guineas a-year if that would prevent my meeting certain men I object to."

"Well, my good fellow, pay the ten guineas to yourself, and hire a room. I promise you, no one will join you. And how pleased the certain men you object to—and who equally object to you—will be!"

But I am warned that time is up, and that my portfolio—still heavy with countless portraits of Sham Swells—must be closed. Young gentlemen, who read these papers, a word to you! Gadabout's experience and manners are unquestionable, whatever his morals *may* have been. To be modest, to be retiring; not to advance your opinions, however correct you may know them to be; not to correct a mal-quotation, or laugh at it, as some do; to lose or win your money—especially win—with equanimity; not to assert your rank, your learning, your proficiency in this or that; to be as polite to an old fishfag as to a duchess; to keep your temper under extreme provocation; to consort cordially, if not intimately, with your inferiors in position or birth; to display a respect you perhaps cannot feel for your superiors in age;—all these will secure you against being a Sham Swell, and will at least have their weight with the "gallery;" and, in spite of themselves and their jealousy, command their respect. To bully an inferior, or abuse a servant, is to make yourself, to a very far-seeing people, a cad. I have heard it said of officers, masters, and others in authority, "He was uncommon strict; but then he was such a thorough gentleman." Good manners and good breeding—*les deux se disent*—I firmly believe, have more to do with a man's success in life than anything else. How often do you hear at the bar, for instance—I am not talking about what I don't understand, it was my own profession—"Such an one is not a great lawyer, or even a great speaker; but he is such a gentleman, he can always get the ear of the Court or jury." Be modest and retiring, my young friends, and polite. Remember your Cicero

—I don't think the sentence is in the Latin Grammar—"Sine verecundiâ nihil rectum esse potest, nihil honestum."

